

Counter-dominants in Handwriting

All Graphologists are used to working out Dominant features in handwriting, i.e. those features which are overwhelming obvious by their presence throughout any given writing. These are always noted down in terms of their hierarchy, and this hierarchy is reflected in the interpretation and construct of the analysis.

Some Graphologists also like to hone in on sub-dominant features in handwriting, i.e. those graphological features which do not have the status of dominant or overwhelming presence, but nonetheless do show up throughout the writing. These too are incorporated into the construct of the analysis, with care always being taken to make sure that they are not promoted to dominant status, but often just to qualify the main features of personality.

There are however many other dominant features in handwriting that for some unknown reason seem to oppose one another; to be aware of this you need to go back to the very early days when you took up the subject. In fact this is the best time to notice elements in writing that appear to be in conflict with one another – for example, a warm garland connection showing sociability and kindness seen in the same writing as a marked left slant which indicates a need to keep a distance from others and to maintain personal privacy.

What is one to make of these two obvious, simultaneously present and conflicting features ? Teachers of Graphology are forever having this sort of query put to them by students new to the subject, who cannot fathom why one major indication in writing runs totally counter to another major feature in the same writing... very often the student never finds a satisfactory answer and is left thinking that Graphology is a strange subject indeed to study.

During my own student period in Graphology I remember this situation very well, and found it difficult to understand how one feature in writing could stand in opposition to another feature in writing, and to make matters worse, these were often *dominant* features, i.e. of major importance for the analysis.

In the fullness of time however, I encountered two ideas that helped me find an answer – one from the world of Psychology and the other from the world of Music that helped me to understand what was going on. In my years spent reading the collected writings of C.G. JUNG, I came upon an idea of vital interest. Jung said that he had a high respect for the presence of a Neurosis in any patient (a Neurosis being a point of conflict within a person, where somehow the person is at war with themselves) because it is only where conflict exists does there exist also the possibility for change and a new developing order. Changes he said, do not emerge from static situations in our lives.

I got to thinking therefore..... could it be that these conflicting elements in writing are pointing the way to a new order within the person, or in other words can we use the information they give as a means of offering the writer

in question some recommendations for future psychological growth and development ?

The second thought came to me whilst listening to Bach one day. The pianist's left hand articulated the soaring high melody of delightful sound, whereas the right hand playing the lower notes was uttering a theme that was not only different from the theme of the left hand, but *completely opposite* in every regard to it. This left and right complete opposition of musical themes can be best heard in the concert hall, where the left-sided first violins and higher strings play one theme, whilst the cellos, violas and lower strings on the right hand of the orchestra often play a theme totally and utterly at variance with what is going on in the left side of the orchestra.

But classically trained musicians are not surprised for one second by this phenomenon – they know that the composer is trying to tell us that life is made up of these simultaneous open contradictions, and that these add up to *one single experience*, i.e. contradictory voices are heard within us for the whole of our lives.

So it is with ourselves and with the Graphology we practise. We experience two major opposing elements in writing, and can perhaps see these contradictions in the same manner as Jung saw inner conflict, and how musicians view opposing themes being present simultaneously in every piece of music they play.

It becomes evident when working with Counter-dominants in handwriting that these provide the pathway or road-map into a much deeper understanding of the writer than would otherwise be possible, and these insights come as a result of understanding the apparent conflicts seen in writing.

In order to recognize these in writing, one would do well to revive the comparative 'innocence' of our very early days in Graphology, and open our eyes up to Graphological indications that just do not seem to go well together. In short, they are major indications in writing that "go against the grain"

There are a number of examples of these we can consider, and I have chosen here several which are the most common and the most important to recognize.

1) Large Absolute size of writing, together with a small middle zone.

This is a very common counter-dominant indeed. The large absolute size of the writing denotes the writer's need to do things on a fairly large scale, to attract attention to him or herself in so doing and a desire to be noticed. However this is opposed by the small middle zone in the same writing which indicates a small need for social interaction – in a general sense the smaller the middle zone, the smaller the person's need to inter-relate closely with others.

What happens in fact with this pattern is roughly as follows: - the writer tends to attract attention to himself by his slightly larger than life behaviour, but has to quickly back-pedal from this stance as soon as others wish to bond with him as a result.

In the analysis I would say something like – “A desire to play a high profile, but minimal need to inter-relate on a personal or social level”

2) Large Absolute Size seen together with a marked Left slant.

This too is not at all uncommon a feature in writing. Again the large absolute size of the writing denotes a desire to portray a high social profile and the need to attract attention, whereas the marked left slant betokens in no uncertain manner a need to maintain privacy, to prioritise internal thoughts rather than what is going on in the outside world, and to resist too speedy an involvement with anyone outside family circles.

These two major factors in the writing are obviously at complete variance with one another, but still manage to appear quite regularly. They do not of course cancel each other out, but make for a more interesting pattern of personal contradiction.

In the analysis I would normally say something like... “A desire to play a high profile and enjoying the benefits of seeking attention, though the personality is one that innately needs privacy”

3) Large Size in writing, combined with very light pressure.

Again the pattern of Large writing, with its emphasis upon doing things in a fairly high-profile sort of way, of needing to seek attention and paint on a broad canvass rather than get into the details of all things: large writing is of course also associated with a need to work out personal ambitions.

The factor of Pressure in handwriting has everything to do with the amount of energy nature has blessed us with: in the case of firm, strong pressure it would seem we are endowed with plenty of drive, but in the case of very light pressure it usually means that the writer is not one gifted with boundless physical drives.

People with very light pressure usually learn very early on to pace themselves when it comes to the expenditure of energy, i.e. to work out what needs to be done in a day and to how much they can and cannot do.

When this is combined with Large writing, i.e. a personality that wishes to expand itself beyond current horizons, then a lack of drive and energy can be a considerable drawback.

Again this adds up to a main contradiction in writing, and in the analysis I would probably comment as follows ... “A desire to draw on a broad canvass and to be ambitious in so doing, but often lacking the true amount of drive and energy to complete all that they would wish”

4) Middle zone dominant writing, combined with a left slant.

This is a very powerful counter-dominant, and one that is seen very regularly in today's world – it is particularly common in the handwritings of women in their teens up to the end of their thirties.

The middle zone as we know covers a multitude of psychological meanings: but in the main it is the zone that tells us a lot about social interaction, and how a person goes about this. That is why the forms of connection, which are essentially a middle zone matter, tells us so much as to *how* a person relates to another.

A middle zone dominant writing therefore tells us that the writer's psyche lays especial emphasis upon social interaction, and that this social interaction has to be of an *emotional* nature. But this is directly contradicted by a left slant which tells us that the writer needs to maintain something of a distance between him or herself and other people, and that they are cautious and careful in ever cementing human relationships. In other words the middle zone dominant calls out for contact with others, whilst the left slant baulks against it.

What therefore do we make of such a huge contradiction in a writing ? The golden rule as ever is that no two opposing elements in handwriting ever cancel one another out – that never does happen. It means that these two contradictory forces somehow co-exist and add to the richness of the character and of the interpretation we must make of it.

In the analysis I normally say something like this when confronted with the pattern..... “Strong social need to inter-relate at a personal level, but distrusting of too intimate a contact: impersonal friendships.”

5) Narrowness between downstrokes in combination with a right slant.

Again a very powerful counter-dominant, and seen quite commonly in everyday practise.

The contrasting pattern here is quite clear; an emphasis upon the vertical movement of the writing (as opposed to the horizontal) gives rise often to narrowness in the letters, and this is most often noticed in the middle zone.

5.

This of course is always associated with introversion, and appearing as it does in the middle zone, one would be aware of social introversion first and foremost. There is often a good deal of anxiety hidden behind this pattern, and those that have marked narrowness in their writings are often bedevilled by worry all of their lives.

But how do we interpret a totally opposite indication in the same writing, that of a marked right slant? This obviously says the reverse of what we have just seen with dominant narrow downstrokes in the middle zone. A right slant seeks to make contact with others, and to establish relationships in response to an unconscious fear of being alone.

Again we cannot ever hope to say that one feature cancels out its opposite. In the analysis I find myself saying something like this about this very powerful counter-dominant..... "Desire to establish firm bonds with others heavily curtailed by anxiety over the prospect of involvement. Very selective friendships."

6) Heavy Pressure in writing, combined with a dominant Garland Connection.

This may well not strike Graphologists as anything particularly unusual, but in fact it does represent a powerful picture of simultaneous contradiction.

Because the writings of Ludwig KLAGES are not in English, few Graphologists seem to be aware that Heavy pressure in handwriting is always, always, a MASCULINE symbol. It indicates as we know a picture of the writer living very closely to his the world of his instincts.

People who write with heavy pressure are often forceful people who naturally act in a competitive way – often preferring to take direct action in a blunt and straightforward way rather than practising deftness and gentleness in their behaviour.

Yet the Garland writer is greatly different in their attitude to the foregoing: the Garland often indicates a more passive and feminine attitude of mind (therefore dominant Garlands in a man's writing often denotes a feminine attitude) and this in tandem with attendant heavy pressure presents an unusual but very significant counter-dominant.

In other words the heavy pressure denotes powerful drives, strong masculine instincts, need for direct no-nonsense action and a desire to be competitive: the soft-hearted garland wants nothing more than to avoid conflict at any cost whatsoever, to be very everyone's friend, and to be disarming.

Thus a strong contradiction is seen with these two features appearing as dominants: in the analysis I would normally say something like....."A firm and aggressive mode of behaving, set against the background of kindness and a distaste for causing conflict with others."

7) Right Slant seen together with a wide spacing between words and lines,

Again another very powerful counter-dominant occasionally seen in writing. These represent two very contrasting and even opposite indications in writing, and have a great deal to say about social comportment.

The right slant as we know betokens a need to bridge the gap that exists between ourselves and others, and as a result the need to make relationships with others. This need is often of a very emotional nature.

Wide spacing between words and lines however points us in a totally different direction, and offers us a strange sight in writing when we do the analysis. It is associated with a need to keep a distance between ourselves and others, and manifests itself often by a need to retreat physically to a quiet world, such as a private room or remote areas to get away from people. Having had their period of removal from others, they are then prepared and able to restore themselves to social life until the need again arises to 'get away from people'.

When seen together in a writing I normally comment as follows "The desire to inter-relate with others in a strong sense, but matched by an equally powerful desire to remain isolated, with a need to frequently retreat from others."

**8) Right slant, but strong leftward tending movements within letter parts.
Left slant, but strong rightward tending movements within letter parts.**

These are not quite so commonly seen counter-dominants, but when they are seen they are very powerful indicators and will have a major effect on the analysis.

In our studies we will all recall (and hopefully remember) that the factors of introversion and extroversion are NEVER merely a question of looking at the writing slant, i.e. leftward, upright or right. It also depends vastly on the pattern of movements within the letter parts themselves, and for this we refer to the copy book template that the writer first learned to write with.

If we note that the writer is adopting more leftward movements in the letter parts than are prescribed in his or her earlier Copy Book, then this is most significant. So too if a writer's graphic movement prescribed more naturally leftward tending movements, and our writer is converting these clearly into rightward movements, then this too is of major significance.

These indications would be judged on their own merits in the writing, but when they are seen against the background of the Slant in writing which is saying something completely different, then the situation becomes most interesting.

What do we make then of a writing showing dominant rightward slant, together with excessive left movements in the letter parts (all zones) – very much a counter-dominant if ever there were one.

I would usually offer this interpretation.... “An appearance of being interested in relationships in an extroverted way, but only for the purposes of self-gain”

As to its opposite: a writing showing a Left slant, with rightward tending movements in all three zones, not called for in the writer’s earlier Copy Book. A very powerful counter-dominant, but one that is fairly rare.

Nonetheless one might comment as follows in the analysis.... “An introverted individual often overcompensating for a level of social reticence and reserve which is not to their liking”

9) Right slant in writing, together with distinct right margin avoidance as a dominant feature.

This is actually not at all uncommon in writings that are regularly presented. The writing shows a marked right slant, yet the writer’s unconscious will not allow him or her to reach into the right side of the writing field with each line that he or she writes.

This is a strong counter-dominant in that the Right slant looks to wish to make contact and cement relations with others, whereas the right side of the paper, which has connections with completed activity and goal achievement in relation to other people, is undoubtedly avoided.

Clearly this represents a powerful set of opposite indications within the same writing, and as ever these opposites never cancel each other out. They are interpreted by contrasting one with another.

I would personally comment as follows on this pattern in the analysis as follows:..... “Extreme inhibition and fear of all future challenges, in the face of a personality that very much needs these challenges.

10) Marked differences between the text and the signature.

These differences tend to be generally recognized by Graphologists. We are generally quite used to seeing a signature that is larger than the text above it, or a signature that has a different slant, different form of connection or a different pattern of pressure than the text of the writing.

These do however fall into the category of counter-dominants: for example a garland text with a signature written entirely in angles.... A legible text and an illegible signature... a writing showing bold and aggressive strokes, with the text of the writing showing inhibition and hesitancy.

In interpreting the differences between the text of the writing and the signature, one is always aware that the signature constitutes what is known as the "Persona" i.e. the image that we wish to portray to the world. This image is often *what we would like to be if we could be, rather than what we actually are*.

In marked cases of differences between text and writing, we are aware that two opposite things are being said, as and with all the other counter-dominants we have seen, we must interpret them as a whole, showing the inbuilt contradiction.

In the analysis I usually commence the sentence with ".....there are a number of differences from the way in which you portray yourself to the world, and how in fact you actually are" I then interpret these according to the graphological indications present.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, nearly all writings we see will show contradictory graphological indications, be these major or minor... they are of vital importance in my view, for one special reason.

Taking up the theme of Jung's view of internal conflict or neurosis (mentioned earlier), he stated that it is only with the tension existing between two opposites within us that the birth of a new psychic order can come about....in other words the emergence of a new order within a person is often presaged by internal conflict, and therefore a writing portraying a wide variety of counter-dominants often alerts us to the possibility that a new order is coming about, or trying to come about.

But why is this important for us as Graphologists ? Simply this – at the end of the analysis we often come to the point where we try and make recommendations for future growth and development.... Each and every Graphologists has his or her own way of doing this. But one thing is for sure – it is often within the conflicts that are shown in the counter-dominants that the kernel of a new psychic order so far as the writer is concerned can be found.... And once found the Graphologist is able to offer positive suggestions as to how such and such may be worked through: in my experience I have found that this is hugely appreciated by those being analysed, whatever age they happen to be.

It is in the hidden centre therefore of every counter-dominant that we find a rich seam of extraordinary information which we ought to use to the full, and never ignore.